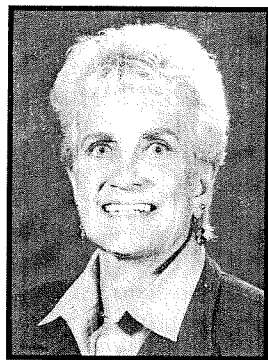


Hammerstrom's

for the people
in the 17th Senate District

Hotline



State Senator

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August 11, 2003



CHARTER SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY GIVEN FURTHER CONSIDERATION. Legislation ensuring that Michigan's charter schools are provided with consistent oversight and accountability has now been referred to a conference committee. The Senate-passed version of Senate Bill 393 establishes numerous guidelines that will ensure proper management of 240 new charter schools over the next ten years, including 15 new urban high school academies in Detroit. The provisions include:

- Subjecting charter schools to the general supervision and leadership of the State Board of Education;
- Filing copies of the charter contract with the Michigan Department of Education;
- Making annual budgets, budget amendments, and quarterly financial statements available for public review, bringing charter schools into compliance with state and federal special education requirements; and
- Mandating that the education management companies provide the school's governing board with detailed information regarding teachers, administrators, and support staff assigned to work at the school.

Unable to gain sufficient support in both the House and Senate, Senate Bill 393 is now awaiting further consideration by the conference committee members.

ASH BORER QUARANTINE EXPANDED. The Emerald Ash Borer, a destructive exotic beetle from Asia that feeds on ash trees, has now given officials reason to expand the six-county quarantine to include the following seven counties: Genesee, Ingham, Jackson, Lapeer, Lenawee, Shiawassee, and St. Clair. The quarantine establishes a one-year moratorium prohibiting the sale of ash nursery stock, bans the movement of all firewood of ANY species from the now 13 quarantined counties, and makes it illegal to move ash trees, branches, lumber, firewood, and other materials unless chipped into one inch in diameter. Anyone who believes they may have inadvertently moved ash materials or firewood out of the newly expanded quarantine area or who suspects an ash tree is infested that is outside of the quarantine area should report it immediately using the state's toll-free Emerald Ash Borer hotline at 866-325-0023.

PSC JOINS EFFORTS ON GASOLINE PRICE WEBSITE. A state website was recently developed to inform Michigan motorists about gasoline purchases in the state to ensure that they pay a fair price at the pump and aren't being "gouged." The website was designed to help consumers learn more about the quality, quantity, and pricing of gasoline throughout the state. The site also provides access to an online gas gouging complaint form, a list of over 5,200 licensed gas stations, and figures for the most recent average gas prices by city or zip code based on credit card purchases. Other information available includes a toll-free number for addressing gas quality questions and complaints, information on the differences in gas grades, consumer tips on buying gasoline and fuel-efficient driving, as well as links to several other sites that provide related information. Under the Michigan Consumer Protection Act, a retailer is prohibited from gouging, or charging a consumer a price that is "grossly in excess of the price at which similar property or services are sold." The information can be accessed online at www.michigan.gov/gasprices.

AUTOMOBILE OWNERS MAY NOW CHECK PERSONAL PLATE IDEAS ONLINE. The Secretary of State office now allows motorists to check the availability of a new personalized license plate idea on the Department's website at www.michigan.gov/sos. Too often a customer is in the branch office trying to purchase their plate only to learn that their first choice is taken, leaving them to come up with alternatives while standing at the counter. The new online program allows customers to select the type of plate then enter the word, phrase, letters, or numbers they wish to use. Once they determine that their idea is still available, fee information is provided, allowing them to go to the branch office with everything necessary to place their order. While the program does not allow plates to be ordered or reserved online, it does make it easier to purchase a personalized license plate in Michigan.

DID YOU KNOW? According to the 2000 Census, Michigan is the fourth largest exporting state in the country after California, Texas, and New York. The volume of the goods we exported from 1993 to 2000 grew the largest of any of the exporting states.